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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of fifteen members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 1 March 2011 from the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations presents its compliments to the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session, and, in reference to the candidature of the Syrian Arab Republic to the membership of the Human Rights Council for the term 2011-2014 in the election to be held in May 2011, which was endorsed by the Asian Group at its meeting of 21 January 2011, has the honour to transmit herewith an aide-memoire, in Arabic and English, containing the voluntary pledges and commitments of the Syrian Arab Republic, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251, entitled "Human Rights Council" (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic has further the honour to kindly request the assistance of the President of the General Assembly in circulating the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 112 (c).

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Annex to the note verbale dated 1 March 2011 from the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

[Original: Arabic and English]

Aide-memoire

Candidature of Syria for the Human Rights Council of the United Nations, for the term 2011-2014, Voluntary pledges and Commitments

The Syrian Arab Republic, as a founding member of the United Nations, worked consistently on advancing the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Syria has contributed with other countries to conclude the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and respected its rules. Syria played an important role during the negotiations and adoption of the most important International Human Rights Instruments. It participated actively in the institutional establishment of the Human Rights Council. On the regional level, Syria participated actively in the promotion of the utmost important regional documents on human rights, therefore is a party to the Arab Charter on Human Rights adopted in 2007, among others.

Promotion and protection of human rights are of highest importance to Syria, which has the conviction that the Human Rights Council is the essential international body addressing human rights issues within the framework of the United Nations. For these reasons, and according to General Assembly resolution 60/251, Syria decided to present its candidature for the membership of the United Nations Human Rights Council for the term 2012-2014, at the elections to be held during the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly, in New York, in May 2011.

Syria's candidature to the Human Rights Council signifies its commitment to respect and to support the inalienable and indivisible nature of all human rights, both on the national and international levels. Syria believes that its membership of the Human Rights Council would contribute towards enriching the quality of dialogue, cooperation and action aimed at promotion and protection of human rights for all peoples.

On the national level

Syria, as a multiethnic, multireligious and multicultural society, works constantly on the promotion and protection of human rights. This is reflected by its commitment to the international treaties, to which Syria is a party, and by the social and religious traditions supporting the protection of human rights. This gave Syria an advanced position in the field of the promotion and protection of the rights of women and children, freedom of religion and belief. The Syrian Government established in 2004 the National Commission on International Humanitarian Law. Its task is: to manage and coordinate national efforts strengthening comprehensive awareness of International Humanitarian Law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, to modify the national legislations, to observe human rights conditions,

and to extend their awareness, including awareness of human rights in the fields of judiciary, interior security forces and other community groups.

Cooperation with the Human Rights Council and High Commissioner for Human Rights

Syria attaches great importance to enhancing constructive international cooperation in the field of protection of human rights, particularly through the Human Rights Council; the essential body of human rights' within the United Nations. Syria is looking forward to enhancing cooperation with the international community, through the Council and the High Commissioner for Hunan Rights. The primary and common aim is to promote and protect human rights, in order to safeguard the dignity of every person, under the criteria of non-politicization and selectivity. Syria cooperates with the Human Rights Council, its Special Procedures, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights, and presents regularly its periodic reports before the various treaty bodies. Recently, the Syrian Government established the National Commission in charge of preparing the National Report within the universal periodic review (UPR) mechanism. The Syrian Government has lately received the Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur on the right to health and the Special Rapporteur on the right to food. The Government has facilitated their visits to observe the adequate health condition of all Syrian citizens and the services the Government affords in this field, and in the field of providing food for every citizen.

On the international level

Syria believes strongly that there is an important relationship between protection of human rights and maintaining international peace and security. The international experiences proved that wars, aggression and foreign occupation bring violations of civil, political, economic, social and cultural human rights. Syria considers that the protection of human dignity and fundamental rights are the base of freedom, justice and peace. Syria believes that international peace will not be reached and maintained, and development will not be achieved, whenever human rights and fundamental freedoms are being violated. For that reason, working on the effective respect, promotion and protection of human rights is the basis of maintaining and developing mankind. As a result of this belief, Syria hosts a big number of refugees, and is determined to reduce their suffering and safeguard their fundamental human rights. Statistics indicate that refugees represent 12 per cent of the population of Syria.

Syria is firmly making efforts to strengthen the international cooperation with all its international partners and international related actors, within the framework of the United Nations, its specialized agencies and other International Organizations such as: the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Environment Programme, in order to contribute to resolving international economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems, on the basis of promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all peoples, without distinction, and according to the international instruments and resolutions of the Human Rights Council.

International Human Rights Instruments, among others, Syria is a party to:

1. International Covenant on Civil and Political Human Rights.
2. International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Human Rights.
3. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Apartheid.
4. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.
5. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.
6. International Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.
7. Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of others, and its final Protocol.
8. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.
9. Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
10. Convention on the Rights of the Child.
11. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts.
12. Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.
13. Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
14. International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.
15. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
16. The Arab Human Rights Chart.
17. Syria is also party to (58) Conventions of the International Labour Organization, notably: Convention No. (98) on the freedom of association and collective bargaining, Convention No. (29) on Elimination of forced and compulsory labour, Convention No. (138) on Minimum Age, Convention No. (182) on abolition of child labour, and the Equal Remuneration Convention.
18. Syria is party to most of the core international human rights instruments, related to cultural and intellectual sides within the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

National and international voluntary pledges and commitments in the human rights field

Syria, pledging to uphold the highest standards in promotion and protection of human rights, to extend a common understanding in this field, and to cooperate on the basis of mutual respect and constructive dialogue, declares, if elected to the Human Rights Council, to intensify and double its continuous and target-oriented

efforts to realize these purposes and to continue working on implementing the following pledges on both national and international levels:

- To continue working to raise promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- To address and implement all human rights equally and without any distinction.
- To continue enhancing and promoting dialogue between Syria and all Special Procedures of Human Rights Council.
- To maintain cooperation with all bodies of International Human Rights Treaties.
- To prepare for a transparent and comprehensive presentation on the situation of human rights in Syria, in accordance with the universal periodic review mechanism (UPR).
- To implement fully the establishing resolution of the HRC No. 60/251 based on the principles of objectivity, transparency, neutralism, and prevention of political selectivity and double standards.
- To continue disseminating human rights culture and developing education in this field.
- To continue strengthening the dialogue and partnership with the Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in accordance with their mandates.
- To develop and protect the third generation of human rights, such as the right to a clean environment, the right to suitable habitation, the right to food, and the right to safe drinking water, among others.

The Syrian Arab Republic cooperated continuously with the international community, including governments, international organizations and institutions and civil society, to overcome obstacles and face challenges implementing fully the highest standard of human rights. Some of these challenges are: poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, extremism, injustice, racial discrimination and foreign occupation. Syria believes that its membership of the Human Rights Council would contribute to accomplish the objectives of the Council, and would support the national and international efforts for promotion and protection of human rights for all, without distinction and selectivity or politicization.